

§ 648.167

50 CFR Ch. VI (10–1–12 Edition)

procedure specified in § 648.162(c) or 648.167.

[76 FR 60641, Sept. 29, 2011]

§ 648.167 Bluefish framework adjustment to management measures.

(a) *Within-season management action.* The MAFMC may, at any time, initiate action to add or adjust management measures if it finds that action is necessary to meet or be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Bluefish FMP.

(1) *Adjustment process.* After a management action has been initiated, the MAFMC shall develop and analyze appropriate management actions over the span of at least two MAFMC meetings. The MAFMC shall provide the public with advance notice of the availability of both the proposals and the analysis and the opportunity to comment on them prior to and at the second MAFMC meeting. The MAFMC's recommendation on adjustments or additions to management measures must come from one or more of the following categories: Adjustments within existing ABC control rule levels; adjustments to the existing MAFMC risk policy; introduction of new AMs, including sub-ACTs; minimum fish size; maximum fish size; gear restrictions; gear requirements or prohibitions; permitting restrictions; recreational possession limit; recreational season; closed areas; commercial season; description and identification of EFH; fishing gear management measures to protect EFH; designation of habitat areas of particular concern within EFH; and any other management measures currently included in the FMP. Measures that require significant departures from previously contemplated measures or that are otherwise introducing new concepts may require an amendment of the FMP instead of a framework adjustment.

(2) *MAFMC recommendation.* After developing management actions and receiving public testimony, the MAFMC shall make a recommendation to the Regional Administrator. The MAFMC's recommendation must include supporting rationale and, if management measures are recommended, an analysis of impacts and a recommendation to the Regional Administrator on whether to issue the management

measures as a final rule. If the MAFMC recommends that the management measures should be issued as a final rule, the MAFMC must consider at least the following factors and provide support and analysis for each factor considered:

(i) Whether the availability of data on which the recommended management measures are based allows for adequate time to publish a proposed rule, and whether regulations have to be in place for an entire harvest/fishing season;

(ii) Whether there has been adequate notice and opportunity for participation by the public and members of the affected industry in the development of the MAFMC's recommended management measures;

(iii) Whether there is an immediate need to protect the resource; and

(iv) Whether there will be a continuing evaluation of management measures adopted following their implementation as a final rule.

(3) *Action by NMFS.* If the MAFMC's recommendation includes adjustments or additions to management measures and, after reviewing the MAFMC's recommendation and supporting information:

(i) If NMFS concurs with the MAFMC's recommended management measures and determines that the recommended management measures should be issued as a final rule based on the factors specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section, the measures will be issued as a final rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(ii) If NMFS concurs with the MAFMC's recommendation and determines that the recommended management measures should be published first as a proposed rule, the measures will be published as a proposed rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER. After additional public comment, if NMFS concurs with the MAFMC's recommendation, the measures will be issued as a final rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(iii) If NMFS does not concur, the MAFMC will be notified in writing of the reasons for the non-concurrence.

(b) *Emergency action.* Nothing in this section is meant to derogate from the authority of the Secretary to take

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emergency action under section 305(e) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

[76 FR 60641, Sept. 29, 2011, as amended at 76 FR 81850, Dec. 29, 2011]

Subpart K—Management Measures for the Atlantic Herring Fishery

SOURCE: 72 FR 11277, Mar. 12, 2007, unless otherwise noted.

§ 648.200 Specifications.

(a) The Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team (PDT) shall meet at least every 3 years, but no later than July of the year before new specifications are implemented, with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) Atlantic Herring Plan Review Team (PRT) to develop and recommend the following specifications for a period of 3 years for consideration by the New England Fishery Management Council's Atlantic Herring Oversight Committee: Overfishing Limit (OFL), Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Annual Catch Limit (ACL), Optimum yield (OY), domestic annual harvest (DAH), domestic annual processing (DAP), U.S. at-sea processing (USAP), border transfer (BT), the sub-ACL for each management area, including seasonal periods as specified at § 648.201(d) and modifications to sub-ACLs as specified at § 648.201(f), and the amount to be set aside for the RSA (from 0 to 3 percent of the sub-ACL from any management area). Recommended specifications shall be presented to the New England Fishery Management Council (Council).

(1) The PDT shall meet with the Commission's PRT to review the status of the stock and the fishery and prepare a Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report at least every 3 years. The Herring PDT will meet at least once during interim years to review the status of the stock relative to the overfishing definition if information is available to do so. When conducting a 3-year review and preparing a SAFE Report, the PDT/PRT will recommend to the Council/Commission any necessary adjustments to the specifications for the upcoming 3 years.

(2) If the Council determines, based on information provided by the PDT/PRT or other stock-related information, that the specifications should be adjusted during the 3-year time period, it can do so through the same process outlined in this section during one or both of the interim years.

(b) *Guidelines.* As the basis for its recommendations under paragraph (a) of this section, the PDT shall review available data pertaining to: Commercial and recreational catch data; current estimates of fishing mortality; stock status; recent estimates of recruitment; virtual population analysis results and other estimates of stock size; sea sampling and trawl survey data or, if sea sampling data are unavailable, length frequency information from trawl surveys; impact of other fisheries on herring mortality; and any other relevant information. The specifications recommended pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section must be consistent with the following:

(1) OFL must be equal to catch resulting from applying the maximum fishing mortality threshold to a current or projected estimate of stock size. When the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, this is usually the fishing rate supporting maximum sustainable yield (F_{MSY}). Catch that exceeds this amount would result in overfishing.

(2) ABC must be equal to or less than the OFL. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) shall recommend ABC to the Council. Scientific uncertainty, including, but not limited to, uncertainty around stock size estimates, variability around estimates of recruitment, and consideration of ecosystem issues, shall be considered when setting ABC. If the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, then ABC may be based on F_{MSY} or its proxy, recent catch, or any other factor the SSC determines appropriate. If the stock is overfished, then ABC may be based on the rebuilding fishing mortality rate for the stock (F_{REB}), or any other factor the SSC determines appropriate.

(3) ACL must be equal to or less than the ABC. Management uncertainty, which includes, but is not limited to, expected catch of herring in the New